

(d) **DETAIL OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.**—Upon request of the chairman of the Commission, the head of any department or agency of the Government may detail, on a non-reimbursable basis, any personnel of the department or agency to the Commission to assist the Commission in carrying out its duties.

(e) **PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY AND INTERMITTENT SERVICES.**—The chairman of the Commission may procure temporary and intermittent services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, at rates for individuals which do not exceed the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

SEC. 706. TERMINATION OF COMMISSION.

The Commission shall terminate 90 days after the date on which it submits its report under section 702(d)(2).

SEC. 707. DEFINITIONS.

For the purposes of this title:

(1) The term "veterans transition assistance and benefits program" means any program of the Government the purpose of which is—

(A) to assist, by rehabilitation or other means, members of the Armed Forces in readjusting or otherwise making the transition to civilian life upon their separation from service in the Armed Forces; or

(B) to assist veterans in making the transition to civilian life.

(2) The term "Armed Forces" has the meaning given such term in section 101(10) of title 38, United States Code.

(3) The term "veteran" has the meaning given such term in section 101(2) of title 38, United States Code.

(4) The term "veterans service organization" means any organization covered by section 5902(a) of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 708. FUNDING.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of Defense shall, upon the request of the chairman of the Commission, make available to the Commission such amounts as the Commission may require to carry out its duties under this title. The Secretary shall make such amounts available from amounts appropriated for the Department of Defense, except that such amounts may not be from amounts appropriated for the transition assistance program (TAP), the Army career alumni program (ACAP), or any similar program.

(b) **AVAILABILITY.**—Any sums made available to the Commission under subsection (a) shall remain available, without fiscal year limitation, until the termination of the Commission.

The title is amended so as to read:

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the benefits programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, to provide for a study of the Federal programs for veterans, and for other purposes.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, this bill is a very important bill. It is the Senate bill S. 1711, the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1996.

Senator SIMPSON had a substitute which we are now entering into the RECORD. Again, this is very substantive legislation, which Senator SIMPSON deserves great accolades for. And I compliment him for the amendment.

CORRECTING THE ENROLLMENT OF THE COAST GUARD AUTHORIZATION ACT CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of House Concurrent Resolution 229, which corrects the enrollment of the Coast Guard authorization conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the concurrent resolution?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be considered agreed to, with the motion to reconsider laid on the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 229) was agreed to.

COAST GUARD AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 1996—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate immediately proceed to the consideration of the Senate conference report to accompany S. 1004, the Coast Guard authorization.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference of the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the House to the bill (S. 1004) to authorize appropriations for the United States Coast Guard, and for other purposes, having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses this report, signed by a majority of the conferees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of September 27, 1996.)

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, I rise in support of the conference report to S. 1004, the Coast Guard Authorization Act. As chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, which has jurisdiction over oil pollution issues, I am pleased to report that S. 1004 contains a number of important improvements to the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, or OPA. These improvements represent several solid steps forward in our ongoing efforts to prevent oil spills from occurring in our Nation's waters and to better respond to the oil spills that do occur.

I convened the Environment and Public Works Committee for a series of hearings to address oil pollution issues earlier this year in response to a number of major oil spills.

The spill of greatest interest to me, as you might imagine, happened just off the coast of my home State of

Rhode Island on January 19 of this year. It occurred when a tug boat had a fire in rough seas and eventually lost control of the barge it was towing, which was carrying millions of gallons of home heating oil. The sad outcome was that the barge, the North Cape, ran aground and spilled some 800,000 gallons of oil into Block Island Sound.

The economic and environmental harm to my State from the spill was extensive. Thousands of lobster carcasses washed up on our shores, hundreds of birds were left dead or severely injured, and many who rely upon the sea for their livelihood in the area were financially hurt, some seriously.

The committee held a total of three hearings. The first of these was held in Rhode Island so we could hear and learn from the people most directly affected by the spill.

In our hearings we learned that, overall, OPA is working pretty well. The clear consensus of all witnesses who testified during our hearings is that OPA is a valuable piece of legislation that has helped to produce faster and more effective spill responses throughout the last 6 years.

Nevertheless, there is room for improvement in the Act. On the prevention side, for example, OPA can, and should, be strengthened so that we can avoid having to respond to an oil spill at all. The recent spills have only served to underscore the need for more effective prevention measures. We also learned that our oil spill response capabilities can, and should, be honed.

As a result, on May 7, I, along with Senators LIEBERMAN and LAUTENBERG, introduced S. 1730, the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Improvement Act. Senator PELL also eventually became a cosponsor. As its name implies, the bill has two major purposes: First, to prevent oil spills from occurring; and second, to provide for a more effective response to the oil spills that do occur.

On June 20, the Committee on Environment and Public Works voted 17 to 0 to report S. 1730. I am extremely gratified that the majority of the provisions and issues addressed in S. 1730 as reported are contained in the conference report before us today.

Let me now explain what these provisions are and the intent underlying them.

ENHANCING OIL SPILL PREVENTION

There are two major provisions in the conference report that will help prevent oil spills from single-hull oil-carrying barges. Both provide for new rules to apply to such barges within 1 year, by October 1, 1997.

The first set of rules will require all single-hull oil-carrying barges to have means to prevent grounding in the event of a problem at sea. The required anti-grounding protection can take the form of an operable anchor and crew